



Connecting Threads

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



From the Superintendent

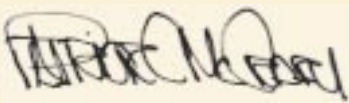
As you read this edition of Connecting Threads, Fall will once again be upon us. But what a summer it has been.

In Summer 2001, I was fortunate to be among the delegation that journeyed to Cambodia. We learned of its long and often heartbreaking history; we experienced its rich culture and heritage; and we began to envision new ways to build bridges both across the world and among Lowell's many diverse communities.

In Summer 2001, we celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Lowell Folk Festival. The sun shone over the many thousands of people who enjoyed the best of our nation's traditional music, dance, crafts, and food.

In Summer 2001, we welcomed throngs of visitors, many of whom for the first time experienced just how much there is to like about Lowell.

Onward to Fall!



PATRICK C. MCCRARY

Documenting A Difficult Past

In June 2001, a group of community leaders from Lowell, Massachusetts visited Cambodia. The trip, among its many other goals, represented an effort by Lowell leaders to better understand the complex culture, history and heritage of nearly one third of Lowell's citizens—first and second generation Khmer-Americans. The trip is expected to spawn educational and cultural exchange programs, economic development initiatives, and a possible museum detailing immigration to Lowell based on human rights issues. Superintendent Patrick McCrary envisions numerous Lowell ethnic groups collaborating to share their history, as well as promote tolerance and understanding among people. Such a museum would likely become part of an international network of Historic Site Museums of Conscience.



Museums of Conscience

In December 1999, a group comprised of various international museum directors, historians, trustees and citizens united at the Rockefeller Foundation Center in Bellagio, Italy in a conference led by the National Park Service that spawned the concept of an international coalition of museums of conscience. The founding member museums consist of: The Gulag Museum in Russia; The District Six Museum in South Africa; The Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh; The Workhouse in England; Project to Remember in Argentina; The Slave House in Senegal; The Terezin Memorial in the Czech Republic, and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum [National Park Service] in the United States.

The International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience represents historic sites across the globe, at many stages of development, presenting and interpreting a wide variety of historic issues, events and people. The Coalition holds the belief that it is the obligation of its members to



GARRETT THURSTON

interpretation of a variety of historic sites. Participating museums serve their communities with expansive outreach programs, as well as interpretation and research on a wealth of common themes, so as to meet the strong criteria to be deemed a member of the Coalition. The Coalition's efforts are

assist the public in drawing connections between history and the contemporary implications of that history. It views stimulating dialogue on pressing social issues and promoting humanitarian and democratic values as its primary function.

Each of the international member sites explores social issues including: racism, sexism, totalitarianism, immigration, forced removal, genocide — through the preservation and

truly to provoke thinking and reflection. For about 50 years, the National Park Service has saved special places in America that tell the stories of civil and social reform. Marie Rust, Northeast Regional Director of the National Park Service, represents the Service's numerous sites focusing on social change and justice — such as Manzanar, Women's Rights, and Brown vs. the Board of Education. ☀



LOWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WHO AM I?

In 1846, at age thirteen, I came to Lowell from Yonkers, New York. My widowed mother, who was born in Ireland, worked hard to support me while I attended public schools. As a young boy I saw many poor and malnourished Irish people coming to Lowell, escaping the horrific famine in their homeland. I went to Lowell High School, which was somewhat unusual for an Irish lad, and after graduation, worked in a grocery store on Central Street. The store's owner, David Gove, was an old Yankee from New Hampshire. In the late 1860s,

Gove took me in as a partner. A few years later I owned the entire business. In 1873, I built a new grocery store on Central Street. This 3-1/2 story brick building was one of the fanciest stores in the neighborhood. Eventually, I invested in other businesses, including a paper mill in Dracut. I became active in city politics in the early 1880s, serving as a board member for Lowell's overseers of the poor. In 1882 I ran for mayor on the Democratic ticket. I won a close election, becoming Lowell's first Irish-American mayor. I was re-elected by an even larger vote the following year. With my wife, Mary E. Seede, I settled in a home on Branch Street. We had a son and three daughters. Two of our girls graduated from Smith College. In the 1890s I devoted my time to new business ventures, as president of the Washington Bank and manager of the Coburn Bobbin & Shuttle Company. Some said of me, "Look what has become of this once-poor Irish boy from Lowell." ☀

See Answer on page 4



LOWELL HISTORY

The Lowell Mill Girls

Hearing of relatively high pay and tolerable working conditions, young women 15-25 streamed into Lowell textile mills during the 1820s, 30s & 40s. By the 1840s, nearly 10,000 women had left New England farms to work in Lowell as “operatives” in the carding, drawing, spinning, weaving, warping and dressing departments. An average stay lasted from one to four years, after which women returned to their farms, married, sought permanent employment, or attended one of few schools open to women at the time.

Women textile workers in the 1830s earned from \$2.00 to \$3.50 a week— wages which compared favorably to domestic service, teaching, or sewing. \$1.25 was deducted each week for room and board. Because workers were recruited from a distance, the corporations provided housing for the large work force. Boardinghouse blocks usually consisted of eight

units, housing twenty-five to forty workers each. Corporation-hired “keepers” prepared meals, cleaned and enforced the regulations established by the corporations. Female operatives were required to live in company owned boardinghouses, go to church regularly, and be in bed by 10:00 p.m. Workers made the most of the little time they had for themselves by reading, attending lectures, paying calls, and going shopping.

Initially, most mill girls were satisfied with life in Lowell. However, conditions in factories began to take their toll. Mill owners required a hot and humid environment in the mills to prevent

threads from breaking. Cotton dust and lint filled the air causing respiratory illnesses. Without proper hearing protection, many workers experienced permanent hearing loss. Machines without protective coverings led to frequent injuries.

Lowell’s financial success led to new industrial cities throughout New England. Competition resulted in falling prices, leading corporations to make efforts to reduce labor costs. By increasing the speed and number of machines assigned to workers without raising wages, corporations maintained high profits. Mill girls responded with strikes and demands for labor reform.

However, it was not until 1874 that Massachusetts enacted a ten-hour law, by which time most of the Yankee mill girls were gone, replaced by immigrant men, women and children. 🌻

WHO AM I?

Answer from page 3:

John J. Donovan. He died on April 21, 1905. If you have additional information on John J. Donovan or his family please contact Gray Fitzsimons, Historian, Lowell NHP. 🌻

Librarian, Volunteer, and Friend

Family and friends of Ed Harley, Lowell National Historical Park's first librarian, gathered with park staff on May 29th to celebrate his memory and his work. Guests visited the library to view new glass bookcases and other furniture purchased as a tribute to Ed's dedicated service. Ed was the librarian from 1982 to 1992. When illness prevented him from working, Ed volunteered, freely giving his time, knowledge and wit to the Park until his death in February 2000.

Before coming to the Park, Ed worked for Bon Marche and Pollard Memorial Library. He had a love

for history, especially the histories of Lowell and Ireland. As was apparent from the many recollections shared at the ceremony, Ed was highly respected by staff and the community for his knowledge, service, and love of a good story.

The Library consists of over 2500 books, oral histories, newspaper clippings, reports, and historical studies of Lowell. It serves as the research center for the Park and is open to the public by appointment. ⚙️



NOTES

Spindle City Corps

This summer, the Spindle City Corps national park youth team contributed ten weeks of conservation work on some of the Park's most difficult backlogged canal maintenance projects. The group learned teamwork, environmental and community service ethics, and visited other Boston area National Parks. The program is funded by a grant from the Public Land Corps. Shown is Spindle City Corps director Melissa Spead with her energetic team at a farewell lunch.



Cambodian Racing Boats

Park Maintenance staff assisted the Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association with 6 racing boats that arrived from Cambodia in time for this year's Southeast Asian Water Festival. Four of the boats are about 55 feet in length, while two are over 100 feet long. The 100-foot boats were cut in three sections for shipping and needed to be reassembled. ⚙️

A New Festival Tradition

The 15th Anniversary of the Lowell Folk Festival marked the second year of the Festival Recycling Program. Over a hundred volunteers worked throughout the weekend collecting and sorting material generated by this year's record crowds.

In 2000, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the Department of Environmental Protection provided a grant for the purchase of recycling barrels and signs promoting the program. This year Wheelabrator North Andover, a trash-to-energy facility, sponsored the "Recycling Center" located at Kirk and French Streets. Volunteers from the Lowell YWCA Youth Programs sorted beverage containers collected throughout the weekend. 32,685 containers were collected, sorted and sent for recycling, more than double the amount recycled in 2000.

This year also marked the first phase of a composting program, initiated at the Boarding House Park/John Street area. Food sellers served their food on paper plates and bowls. Recycling coordinators



located Bio-Corp, a California company which manufactures cutlery made of cornstarch, which is biodegradable. The cornstarch cutlery was purchased through a grant from the North East Solid Waste Committee, a consortium of 23 surrounding communities. Waste was brought to the Recycling Center, inspected for potential contaminants (plastic or metal) and then raked into a packer truck provided by Lowell's Department of Public Works. The packer truck brought the estimated 3300 pounds of biodegradable material to Agri-Source, a composting company in Ipswich, MA. Within twelve weeks the waste is converted into clean and usable compost, which will be brought back to Lowell and placed around shrubbery in the downtown area. In 2002 small bags containing some of the compost will be available to festival attendees. ☀



INTERPRETATION

Cultural Center Changes

There are changes in the making at the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center. A new Coordinator, Mehmed Ali, was hired in June to

help reinvigorate the Center's mission "to tell the human story" of Lowell. A community committee will work with the Park to surface ideas for future exhibits, courses, programs and performances. Another change at the Mogan Center is the addition of the Angkor Dance Troupe. The Troupe will relocate their offices to the third floor of the Center and utilize adjacent space for dance practice. If you need further information about the Mogan Center please call Ali at 978-970-5046. ☀

Consensus For Cleaner Canals

On June 26th a community forum of over 80 people was held to discuss conditions along the nearly six miles of historic canals that thread through Lowell's neighborhoods. A panel representing Lowell National Historical Park, MA Department of Environmental Management; Eldred Field Hydro Plant; City of Lowell and the Coalition for a Better Acre presented the roles and responsibilities of their organizations with regard to the canal system.

After detailing the system's complex ownership, the group agreed that the canals were an important resource for preservation and tourism, as well as for hydroelectricity. Audience dialogue centered on further defining responsibilities for maintaining canal areas. Citizen committee members from the Coalition for a Better Acre described their Western Canal clean-up project, but emphasized the need for agencies to deal with the problems of trash and stagnant water in the canals, and repair of lights and fencing along the canals.

Pledging to work together to develop a comprehensive agreement detailing the responsibilities for the canals, the group concluded that an agreement of this sort would go a long way to promote public awareness and better upkeep of the canal system. ☀

AROUND THE SERVICE

Picture This!

Celebrate America's national parks! If you've taken a great photo of your National Parks this year, it could make you a winner! Gather your most memorable,

dramatic pictures from 2001 or take some new ones and enter them by January 15, 2002, in the National Parks Pass Experience Your America™

Photo Contest. The

Grand Prize: Your winning picture will be featured on the 2003 National Parks Pass and you'll receive a 4-day, 3-night trip for 4 to the National Park of your choice. For more information, visit www.nationalparks.org ☀



CALENDAR



JAMES HIGGINS

Kerouac Weekend

Join Lowell National Historical Park and Lowell Heritage State Park in celebrating the life and works of Jack Kerouac.

October 5-7. Special tours and events will include walking tours to the places Kerouac wrote about while growing up in Lowell in the 1930s and boat tours highlighting Kerouac's view of the Merrimack River. Call for more information. ☀

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Difficult Pasts:

Will Lowell join network of museums around the world documenting social issues and historical conflict?

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New Life for Festival Trash:

Successful Composting Program launched at 2001 Lowell Folk Festival. **page 6**

Consensus on Canals:

Group meets to discuss canal system challenges.

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Cover photo: Members of the Angkor Dance Troupe

perform at the 2001 Lowell Folk Festival.

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Cometings Threads is a publication of Lowell National Historical Park, a unit of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. For more information on any of the items contained within, please contact the Park at 67 Kirk Street, Lowell, MA 01852, 978-970-5000 (978-970-5002 TDD) for the hearing impaired), www.nps.gov/lowe.

Newsletter design: Moira Gillis/Micro Dog Studio

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